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ABSTRACT

Historically, the college administration was the president alone, and the essential, if not only, qualification for the position was that he be a scholar. To meet the multifarious demands of running today's institution of higher learning, the president has been joined by an administrative team, each member specializing in a particular aspect of administrative operation. The emergence of a considerable amount of literature dealing directly or indirectly with the evaluation of college and university administrators suggests a growing concern for the assessment of administrative performance. There would also appear to be concensus on the desirability of professional development for administrators, to the extent that it is financially feasible. The traditional approach to evaluation has been the use of instruments for rating the various desirable characteristics or activities. Another approach is that of the evaluation committee. The evaluation process should be continuous and ongoing. No one method or model of evaluation is necessarily the correct approach, since each must be fashioned to meet the needs of the particular institution and its setting. But while the practice is still quite limited, the idea is alive, and the approaches are beginning to become more sophisticated. A bibliography is included. Faculty development will be considered in an upcoming issue of "Research Currents." (Author/MSE)

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THE EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS

Charles F. Fisher

Introduction

The literature on higher education has grown immensely during the past decade. In the seventies this growth in part has reflected a rapidly expanding interest in both faculty evaluation and faculty development. Considerable research has been conducted on the evaluation of teaching and faculty performance, and most colleges and universities are believed currently to practice some type of faculty evaluation (Smith 1976). Likewise, about half of the nation's institutions of higher learning now have some form of faculty development program (CASC-AAHE 1977) and recent years have seen the establishment of an increasing number of both local and regional "centers for the improvement of teaching" (Smith 1976).

In contrast to the emphasis higher education properly has begun to place on the evaluation and development of its faculty, there has been far less written and done in the areas of systematically assessing the performance and enhancing the professional development of administrative personnel. Indeed, we are a Johnny-come-lately by comparison with industry, the military, and even other levels of education.

Historically, the college "administration" was the president alone, and the essential, if not only, qualification for the position was that he be a scholar. To meet the multifarious demands of running today's institution of higher learning, the president has been joined by an administrative "team," each member specializing, with delegated responsibility, in a particular aspect of administrative operation. Not infrequently, however, the administrator comes to his/her post with limited training and/or administrative experience, often realizing a need, sometimes acute, to know more about the administrative process and its relationship to organizational behavior and development, current issues, educational missions, institutional goals, role expectations and realizations, and his/her opportunities for individual performance improvement. Even long-time administrators experience these pangs of need in today's dynamic world of postsecondary education.

The concept of training college and university administrators appears to predate that of any formal administrative evaluation by over three-quarters of a century. The first actual class in higher education apparently was taught in 1893 (Cowley 1969) and courses and degree programs have been developed over the years to where in 1974 sixty-seven doctoral programs were being offered (Dressel and Mayhew 1974). The inception of major inservice professional development institutes dates back to the mid-fifties; administrative internships, to the early sixties; and the expanding number of workshops and seminars, to the late sixties and early seventies. The literature addressing the professional development needs of college administrators, however, is still relatively sparse, and publications dealing with administrative evaluation have had their advent only during the past few years.

Just during this past year the emergence of a number of papers and speeches (Clifford; Farmer; Gross; Stroup; Zion), articles (Fenker; Hays; Munitz; Wallenfeldt), monographs (Anderson; Surwill and Heywood), and books (Dressel; Genova et al.), and the conferences that are planned or already conducted in 1977 (Galloway and Fisher) dealing directly or indirectly with the evaluation of college and university administrators suggest that there is a growing concern for, and interest in, the assessment of administrative performance in higher education. Implicit in most of these, and explicit in a few, is the inherent relationship between personnel evaluation and professional development. While still usually treating them as discrete processes, higher education is beginning to consider both sides of this same coin, realizing that they are concurrent and continuously interacting processes, whether systematic or informal, and whether public or personal.

There would appear to be consensus in the higher education community on the desirability of professional development for administrators, to the extent that it is financially feasible. The idea of formal administrative evaluation, however, is not universally acclaimed, perhaps due in part to some misunderstanding regarding its purpose and resulting opportunities. The primary purpose of any evaluation and development program, be it for faculty, administrators, students, trustees, or whomever, is to help improve individual performance and the overall operation and effectiveness of the educational enterprise. The academy, as a collection of more highly educated people than any other social institution in the world, and with a mission to educate and develop the future citizenry of our nation, deserves to have the very best leadership possible.

This paper is intended as a brief overview of some of the current considerations relevant to the evaluation and development of college and university administrators. The treatment is by no means exhaustive, but the topic, nonetheless, is too significant to be slighted more than necessary. To give it proper attention, therefore, space limitations necessitate addressing it in two parts. Part I on Administrator Evaluation is included here; Part II deals with the Professional Development of Administrators and will follow in a

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later issue of *Research Currents* this spring. Despite the separation of the topic, it is hoped that the inherent relationship between evaluation and development will be evident throughout.

Part One: Evaluation of Administrators

Personnel evaluation may be defined as a process of review to assess individual performance and to make a value judgment concerning this assessment for the benefit of both the individual and the organization. The assessment helps identify areas of needed and/or desired individual improvement, and the value judgment clarifies the areas, ways, and means of personal and professional development that will enhance individual and, consequently, institutional performance. Evaluation of people and institutions in some way is inevitable; it is happening continuously, whether informally or formally. The purpose of any structured system of evaluation is simply to give greater direction and effectiveness to the process. "The formal system will complement an informal evaluation system. It will not—it cannot—replace (it)" (Anderson 1975, p. 11).

The recent interest in administrator evaluation is part of the trend toward total institutional evaluation and development. This has been prompted in part by a general appreciation of the need to improve the management of colleges and universities. It also has been catalyzed by the fairly recent, but nonetheless increasing pressures for "accountability" from both external (e.g., legislative) and internal (e.g., faculty) sources alike. For example, the AAUP's 1974 Committee "T" statement clearly stipulates the expected significant faculty contribution to "judgments and decisions" regarding not only the selection of academic administrators but their "retention or nonretention" as well (AAUP 1977). If evaluation is inevitable, and justifiable reasons for a systematic evaluation of administrators exist, then it may well be appropriate for administrators to take the initiative to help shape the "how."

Rationale

The most common rationale for evaluating administrators includes the following (synthesized from Anderson, Genova et al., Miller, Nordvall, and Surwill and Heywood):

- To identify, through evaluation feedback, needed areas of individual professional development and personal growth.
- To improve individual administrative performance.
- To help define more clearly individual objectives consistent with institutional missions and goals.
- To improve internal communications, administrative teamwork, and the overall management of the institution.
- To reward outstanding administrative performance.
- To validate the selection, retention, salary and promotion processes.
- To inventory personnel resources for reassignment or training.
- To help answer the external demands for accountability from government, trustees, alumni, and the general public, and thus improve the credibility of the administrative process.
- To help answer the internal demands for accountability from faculty and students (who ask, If I am subject to evaluation, why not administrators?), and thus improve the credibility of the administrative process.
- To enlighten all audiences regarding the institution's integrity and worth.

Traditionally, evaluation has been a downward process, with its inception at the lower end of the heirarchy, and with faculty evaluating students and administrators evaluating faculty. The advent of student and peer input in the evaluation of teaching introduced upward and parallel factors. The bridge to administrator evaluation probably was spanned through the evaluation of department chairmen. Governing boards, who hold the final authority for appointing presidents, also have the authority for presidential accountability, and therefore, the evaluation of presidents and other administrators. Brewster was perhaps the first to emphasize this in 1969 when, after assuming the presidency of Yale University, he requested an evaluation of his performance on completion of his first seven years in office. Since then, a number of other institutions, both public and private, and a few state systems (e.g., the State University of New York and the Minnesota State University System) have implemented policies requiring the periodic evaluation of their chief executive officers, usually in conjunction with provisions for periodic professional leave and development opportunities.

However, such governing board authority for accountability concomitantly may be delegated to the institutional president for the evaluation of his or her staff. It is the president who therefore should assume the responsibility for any administrator evaluation program. Ideally, all administrators, from the president on down, should be subject to evaluation, and presidential evaluation, particularly if it is self-initiated, makes that of other administrators more acceptable. All persons and constituencies with whom the person under review interacts, and who thus are knowledgeable about his or her performance, should be involved in the process (Genova et al., 1976, p. 142; Nordvall 1975, p. 2). The immediate supervisor of the person being reviewed normally conducts the evaluation, with assistance from others. The appropriateness of the degree of upward, parallel, and downward input; of total, selective or representative participation; and of the use of outside consultant/evaluators depends on the nature of the position being evaluated, the size of institution or unit, and other features peculiar to the setting and situation. The more comprehensive the scheme, the more valid the results; but this must be weighed against the factor of desirability in terms of time, effort, cost, and practicability.

Performance, Goals, and Criteria

Any evaluation process must have a general frame or normative reference against which to measure and assess the observed outcomes. An individual's performance, for example, might be compared with that of (1) his or her predecessors in the position, (2) all other individuals currently in similar positions, (3) a platonic "ideal" performance, (4) one's past performance, (5) one's own performance goals, and/or (6) the performance expectations others have for him or her. Only with such reference(s) can the discrepancy between the present state and the expected or desired conditions be identified, and can bridging the gap be encouraged and accomplished.

While all of these considerations may enter into administrator evaluation, the essence of the process rests with the assessment of competency-based performance vis-à-vis clear goal expectations for the administrator—his or her own *and* those that superiors (e.g., for the president, the board of trustees) and subordinates have for the evaluatee. Thus, multidimensional comparisons would be possible not only between, say, the dean's expectations and perceptions of his or her own performance, but also the faculty's expectations and the president's perceptions, the president's expectations and the dean's own perceptions, and so on.

Determination of and agreement on clear performance goals, priorities and expectations obviously are critical to the evaluation process and should reflect written administrative role definitions

(general goals/expectations) and job descriptions (more specific responsibilities) articulated at the time of appointment (e.g., through "mission contracts"). The traditions and unique character of the institution, its purpose, and constituency, and any unusual current problems and issues should also be considered. The concept of "management by objectives" (MBO) is frequently proposed as a useful approach to arriving at common goals and priorities, identifying specific areas of administrative responsibility, and agreeing upon measures for assessing the contribution of individual members. The use of "growth contracts" for administrators (Gross 1976) is one adaptation of the MBO process that may also contribute not only to the identification of administrative goals but to the overall evaluation and development of administrators.

According to Anderson (1975, pp. 27-33), criteria for administrator evaluation should relate to each of the following areas: education and experience, productivity and efficiency, performance criteria, leadership, management, personal performance, personal qualities, educational statesmanship, political and fiscal astuteness, and administrative style. Desirable characteristics for administrators that have been proposed (e.g., Hillway, 1973; Cohen and March, 1974; Fenker, 1975) normally cover such general categories as quality and effectiveness of work, interpersonal relationships, leadership ability, professional interest, commitment to the institution, and personal integrity. Qualities, traits, and skills pertinent to each area speak to specific aspects of planning, resource utilization, problem-solving, decision-making, communicating, and other operating methods.

Approaches and Uses

The traditional approach to evaluation has been the use of instruments for rating the various desirable characteristics or activities, usually on a scale or continuum that indicates the extent to which the person being evaluated demonstrates competence or activity for each trait (e.g., "high—low," "always—never," etc.), and sometimes including overall performance assessment items. To preclude the "halo effect," appropriate questionnaire items would contain an element of mutual exclusivity between their polar options. More sophisticated appraisal forms have begun to incorporate provisions for the evaluator to indicate both where the evaluatee *is* and where he or she *should be* on the scale in light of his or her performance expectations and perceptions and those of others. While standardized forms are common for the evaluation of students and faculty today, validated instruments dealing with administrator evaluation, where they may exist, are still fugitive documents. (For examples of a few administrator evaluation forms, see Fenker 1975; Miller 1974; Rasmussen 1976; Stroup 1976; and Surwill and Heywood 1976.)

Another approach to administrator evaluation is a modification of the "search committee" model proposed by Anderson (1975), which makes use of an ad hoc evaluation committee comprised of members drawn from the evaluatee's various constituencies. This normally would include trustees (primarily in presidential evaluations), other academic administrators, faculty, students, alumni, and perhaps others as may be appropriate. The committee prepares an assessment portfolio that contains a description of the role, a "self-evaluation statement" submitted by the person under review (reflecting his or her perceptions, expectations, personality, administrative style, etc.), various "descriptive and evaluative statements representing the valid interests of the various constituencies," and a "consensus statement with dissents or minority statements, if any, of the entire committee" (p. 1).

Whatever method is used, the primary purpose in evaluating administrators is to help the individual improve his or her job performance and satisfaction. The findings should be studied by the immediate supervisor (a trustee committee, in the case of presidential evaluation) who makes his or her own evaluation in light of the total picture. The supervisor then reviews the summarized results in person with the evaluatee, commending and reenforcing positive behavior while exploring ways and means of professional growth in any areas of desired or needed improvement, and assisting the individual in establishing or modifying his or her developmental goals. Of course, the person under review should have the opportunity to explain, clarify, or appeal any judgments he or she feels are ambiguous, unfair, misinterpreted, or inappropriate.

The evaluation process should be continuous and ongoing. The formal evaluation of an individual should not be on an ad hoc or crisis basis but rather on a regular (though flexible) cycle of perhaps every two-to-five years, depending upon the particular circumstances. When and how a program is initiated also depends upon the organizational climate of the institution. The objectives and processes of an evaluation program should be clearly stated and the use of the results known and accepted by all concerned. Those being reviewed should know and agree to the criteria of evaluation and understand that the purpose is positive and developmental rather than judgmental in any threatening sense. (Bridging the gap between the use of personnel evaluation for professional development vis-à-vis retention/promotion decisions remains an agonizing and unresolved issue.) The confidentiality rights of individuals must be assured and maintained throughout. And, perhaps most important, all who are involved must perceive any formal method of assessment as more desirable and helpful than the already present continuous process of informal evaluation by itself.

Further Considerations

No one method or model of evaluation is necessarily the "correct" approach, since each must be fashioned to meet the needs of the particular institution and its setting. The objectives are the same; it is only the processes that differ, although all no doubt will contain both objective and subjective measures to some degree, since administrators deal as much with people and ideas as with concrete things. Initial efforts should be regarded and publicized as experimental in nature so that the method itself can be evaluated and its validity determined. Provision for including the self-evaluation of the person under review enhances the acceptance and meaningfulness of the process. Furthermore, it should be assumed that the evaluation process not only records but, to some extent, also influences individual attitudes and behavior.

Administrator evaluation obviously is no simple, clear-cut process. Higher education does not lend itself readily to systematic assessment. Nor are administrative skills and performance subject to tidy measurement. Dressel has identified four major underlying problems: (1) defining exactly what administration is vis-à-vis leadership and management; (2) the difficulty of delineating the power of administrators in light of the complicated organizational hierarchy and both internal and external sources of authority and influence; (3) the lack of clear and generally accepted criteria of administrative success; and (4) that administrators often "purposely communicate in ambiguous ways" (1976, pp. 376-82). Thus, the difficulty of relating missions and programs to competencies and performances manifestly complicates the development of precise measurement techniques. Nonetheless, in appreciation of the desirability of and perhaps need for administrator evaluation, there are

scholars and practitioners who have begun to accept the challenge. While the practice is still quite limited, the idea is alive, and the approaches are beginning to become more sophisticated.

Implications

Briefly summarized, the evaluation process is a review of performance vis-à-vis goal expectations and individual potential through the use of appropriate assessment techniques that involve those persons with whom the individual interacts so as to determine areas of needed and desired professional development.

Even though the evaluation of administrators is neither simple nor panacean, it *can* offer promise. A systematic program properly conceived and implemented can be educative in many ways for all concerned, including trustees and faculty. It can provide a sense of security not only for the community but for the individual being evaluated. With an open and supportive approach, it can contribute to a climate of mutual trust and respect that will lead to greater institutional morale and individual motivation. Most important, it can assist in recognizing areas of needed and/or desired personal growth and professional improvement and can help to identify and encourage appropriate opportunities for developing the leadership potential of the individual and his or her contribution to the effective operation of the total academic enterprise.

Whether realized through self-assessment, an informal evaluation process, or a structured appraisal system, the desire for self-improvement is inherent in the nature of human beings. Numerous opportunities for the professional development of college and university administrators already exist at national, regional, and even local levels. But there are still many unmet needs, and a program of staff growth and development must begin at home. These concerns will be addressed in a later issue of ERIC *Research Currents*.

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